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ABSTRACT

The future of New Mexico, which has a unique diverse minority population (Hispanics, Blacks, and Native Americans), is linked with how well the educational systems serve the special needs of these groups. However, these groups are the least educationally prepared to function meaningfully in and to contribute to both the contemporary society and the growth potential in New Mexico. Higher education, representing the ending integral in the educational preparation of minorities for employment and functional proficiencies, can be identified as the major opportunity to redress the problem. Unfortunately, minorities have not always fared very well in institutions of higher education and training. Representing a minority's perspective on the critical issue of minority access to excellence in higher education, this paper discusses minority access to higher education in terms of enrollment, retention, and persistence, and presents a discussion for expanding the definitions of excellence and excellence accountability. The paper draws upon the professional and life experiences of a minority student and instructor in higher education, an informal survey of 12 minority students, and a review of current literature on the status of minority education. (NQA)

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MINORITY ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A paper presented to

the Governor's Commission on Higher Education

by

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MINORITY ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the inextricable linkage of New Mexico's economic and cultural future to the state's educational systems, the Governor created the Commission on Higher Education. He charged the Commission to seek answers directed towards defining excellence and to make recommendations for promoting excellence in New Mexico Higher education and training institutions. Responding to the Governor's charge, the Commission held hearings at the higher education and training institutions around the state. During the hearings each institution articulated standards for excellence in terms of excellent faculty, research, publications, facilities.. Each institution enthusiastically proclaimed and documented excellence within certain monetary limitations. These limitations prompted eloquent pleas by each institution for more money in order to maintain and to extend excellence via the retention and recruitment of more excellent faculty, more support for research, more sophisticated equipment...

The writer agrees that excellence in higher education and training described and proclaimed by the institutions are indeed valid and highly commendable; and the writer also agrees that the pleas for more money are equally valid and commendable. However, the problem, as the writer sees it, is that, too often racial and ethnic minorities have not always fared very well in the "commendably excellent"

institutions of higher education and training. (In this paper minorities refer to the racial and ethnic groups: Hispanics, Blacks, and Native Americans.) And, since New Mexico has a unique diverse minority population-about 1 in 2-it follows that New Mexico's future is equally linked with how well the educational systems serve the special needs of these groups in New Mexico. Why is this true?

The answer to the question is dismal but no less true: <u>These groups are the least educationally prepared to function meaningfully in and to contribute to both the contemporary society and the growth potential in New Mexico</u>.

Let me hasten to make a clarification. This is not a statement about racial or genetic capabilities. This is a statement about the significant numbers of minorities who are educationally underdeveloped for employment and social functioning in the fast changing technological society. What has brought minorities to such a dismal disadvantaged state? This is what the writer sees: Across the nation, including New Mexico, minorities are underdeveloped educationally by indifferent and insensitive teachers and administrators, by low expectations of students' potential, poor curriculum and career counseling, discriminatory and inadequate financial aids, and over all-lack of schools' accountability for educating minority students.

In spite of these obstacles, minorities have made progress in education. This fact is attested to by the increase in the number of minorities

participating in higher levels of employment, higher levels of government posts and higher levels of social and civic responsibilities. On the other hand, while there has been progress, it has been inadequate to close the gap between minority and white educational attainments. Indeed, progress is merely miniscule when compared to the overwhelming educational needs of minorities. In many ways progress can be described as one step forward and thousands of steps backwards. This is to say, although a few minorities are meaningfully participating at higher levels than ever before, on a broader and more collective scale, as groups minorities still have a long way to go. This statement is affirmed and reaffirmed over and over again when one reviews the appalling disparities suffered by minorities in just about every measure of a dismal life - poor housing, poor health, family instability. What has brought us to this dismal state?

The first answer of course is historical racism. However, we must come face to face with another terrible and disheartening fact: Although many minorities still face discrimination in jobs, the educational underdevelopment for employment and functional proficiencies is no less crippling to minorities than historical racism!

The writer quickly recognizes that this responsibility is shared by the minority family and educational system at all levels. However, placing blame is considered less important than identifying and acting upon opportunities to address the problem. Fortunately, higher education - representing the ending integral in the educational

preparation of minorities for employment and functional proficiencies - can be identified as the major opportunity to redress the problem. Unfortunately, as has been stated, minorities have not always fared very well in institutions of higher education and training.

For this reason, the writer believes that in order for the Commission to be truly responsive to the Governor's charge, the Commission's Report should include a circumspect examination of how well higher education in New Mexico serves minorities. Through an examination of the stated concerns, the Commission should answer these basic questions: Are minorities in New Mexico educationally prepared for responsible employment and social functioning? If not, what needs to be done? Answers to the questions should lead to a redefinition of excellence and excellence accountability in higher education that is responsive to the special educational needs of minorities.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper, prepared by a racial minority Commissioner, is to bring a minority's perspective to addressing the above questions. Part I discusses minority access to higher education in terms of enrollment, retention, and persistence. Part II is a discussion for expanding the definitions of excellence and excellence accountability. In the redefinition, standards for excellence should weigh equally the in-put (excellent faculty, research, publications...), and the out-put (levels of employability and functional proficiencies of minority students and graduates).

The paper draws upon the writer's professional and life experiences as a minority student and instructor in higher education. The paper also draws upon an informal survey of 12 minority students, and a review of current literature on the status of minority education. In the informal survey, the students were asked to prepare a one-page response to the question, "What does excellence in higher education mean to you?" Finally, the paper reflects the writer's openness to those persons seeking the ear of a Commissioner on Higher Education. Although the paper draws upon several sources, it should be emphasized that the paper represents a minority's perspective on the critical issue of minority access to excellence in higher education.

A few more important notes. A focus on minority access to excellence in higher education and training is not to say that the writer does not recognize that some non-minorities may also need special help. Second, the seemingly lumping of Hispanics, Blacks, and Native Americans as needing special attention is not mere mindless egalitarianism. In fact, the writer very well recognizes that on a person by person basis, the intra-group disparities are even more striking than inter-group disparities. This is to say, all three groups do not share exactly the same problems at the same levels. However, what is recognized is that educationally, these groups have been so systematically deprecated, crippled, and disempowered so as to merit special attention and special relief measures. Let me quickly add, this is not a plea for preferential treatment for minorities, because such treatment is often viewed negatively as reverse discrimination.

But is is an advocacy for enforced "temporary compensating" relief directed towards supporting the groups to reach educational parity for meaningful social and civic participation and productivity. When this goal has been attained, compensating relief will no longer be needed. How do minorities reach educational parity? Excellence in education as defined in this paper would go a long way in equalizing minority access to social and civic responsibility now, and in New Mexico's bright future.

MINORITY ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Part I. Access to Higher Education--A Minority's Perspective

Problem overview

The struggles and social turmoil of the 1960s which brought sweeping dynamic social changes, also brought new educational opportunities for minorities. Undergirding the new opportunities were Affirmative Action programs purporting compensations to minorities for crippling past injustices and racism. The Affirmative Action package via intensified recruitment, financial aids and more liberal admissions, brought dramatic increases in minority enrollments.

Now, in the 1980's, Affirmative Action is being greatly undermined at the Federal level by severe budget cuts in education, including student financial aid, the revision of affirmative action requirements and the seemingly abdication of the Federal government's role of monitoring and enforcing equal access to quality education.

New Mexico has responded to the budget cuts by increasing state aid for students. This has resulted in an increase in minority enrollment in higher education in New Mexico. However, the enrollment figures can be misleading. For example, even though nationally, Black enrollment increased 85 percent during 1964-65,[1] during 1975-76 Blacks made up only 6.2 percent of all degree candidates at the nation's public institutions.[2] At the masters and doctoral levels the statistics are even more dismal. In 1975-76 with a population of about 12 percent, Blacks made up only 3.3 percent of doctoral recipients in the nation's

public institutions. In 1970 when 5 percent of the total Black population age 25-35 got bachelor degrees, 17 percent of the total White population got a first degree. In 1975, when the Black figure reached 11 percent, 22 percent of the White population or twice the number of Blacks got degrees.[3] Based on these examples, it is clear that increased enrollment is not enough. What is wrong? Many theories have been offered to explain this disgrace. Most of the theories build upon the notion of "blaming the Victim". For example, the very popular theory of culture deprivation or the deficit model. According to this theory minorities (basically the low socio-economic student) cannot overcome the problems of poverty and social pathology and take advantage of the new educational opportunities. Therefore, many of these students do not graduate but are victims in a "revolving door" system which in fact obliterates the intended fruits of increased minority enrollment. I would like to offer another explanation. I believe the "revolving door" makes this fact irritatingly clear: The traditional White institutions are, in general, incapable or even unwilling to meet the specific academic and support needs of minority students.

In other words, increased enrollments is indeed a good step, but it is just that - a first step in minority access to higher education. From a minority's perspecitve, access to higher education means the institutions must go beyond the initial step of enrollment; access also includes opportunities for retention and persistence, which are necessary for academic achievement and excellence. How can the

institutions be responsive to the minority clientele which, because of historical injustices resulting in poor socio-economic circumstances and educational backgrounds, most often suffer the "revolving door experience"? What is needed to promote the group's retention and persistence leading to academic excellence in higher education?

The many exemplars of minority academic achievement clearly demonstrate that minority students can be educated successfully. Therefore I would suggest several challenges, which if acted upon by the State of New Mexico and the institutions of higher education and training will, I believe, go a long way towards maximizing minority retention and persistence in higher education. The Challenges are 1) financial aid, 2) academic support services, and 3) motivating psychological support via institutional responsiveness to culture diversity.

Challenge #1: Financial Aids

As a group, Whites have far greater opportunities for economic support than minority students. White students receive much of their support from parental contributions, personal savings and earnings from jobs which are mostly denied to minority students (see figures on minority youth employment). On the other hand, because of the basic economic deficiency in the minority family, parents of minority students contribute about 1/3 the parental contributions for White students. All of this means that minority students are much more dependent on financial aids than are White students. Nonetheless, most financial aid in all categories is awarded to White students. This is not stated to suggest

less financial aid for White students, it is a clear ples for more aid for minorities. With the withdrawal of federal funds, increased financial aid from the state becomes critical, because without funding sources other than the family, minorities will have severely limited retention and persistence in higher education and training.

This fall, I observed a young Black mother caught in an aggravating challenge for financial aid. The woman, running to the office of financial aids almost daily, was either late for class or had to leave early. Her harried expression was not pleasant to observe. The final straw - despite her near nightmarish pursuits, she did not receive the often promised financial aid. Nonetheless, somehow she is persisting. But, at what level? Surely we can understand this: the inordinate amount of time and energy consumed in chasing financial aid, worrying about money for food, soap, and toothpaste,... Can not be used to concentrate on the concepts of Social Work Practice theory or the procedures used in fractional distillation in the chemistry lab.

This is the challenge: Since about 80 percent of minority students' total educational expenses must come from financial aids, and since federal funds are drying up or are being diverted, New Mexico must increase its investment in higher education for minorities via increased financial aids.

Challenge #2: Basic Academic Support

In addition to economic deficiency, a significant number of minority

students come to higher education with severe basic academic deficiencies. The deficiencies can be traced to poor socio-economic families and inferior educational backgrounds. Whatever the reason for deficiencies, once enrolled in higher education, the institution has the responsibility to assure that minority students are not further penalized in the pursuit of academic excellence. The first prerequisite is the institution's commitment to the principle that all students are educable, and that the disadvantaged student may require remedial and/or corrective education.

This is the challenge: So, although remedial and corrective education in higher education is expensive, until the problem can be addressed at more appropriate levels (primary and secondary levels), the institutions must provide adequate funding for correcting education deficiencies. This must be offered in a manner that demonstrates respect for and belief in the dignity of all students.

Challenge #3: Motivating Psychological Support via Institutional Responsiveness to Cultural Diversity

A study completed at New Mexico State University about 2-3 years ago revealed that about 52 percent of students entering the University that year were drop-outs. Moreover, about 62 percent of the drop-outs had a Grade Point Average of 2.5 or better. Although the study was not about the minority students per se, we can assume that at least a few of the students were minorities. If so, the drop-out rate among students earning a 2.5 or better is very important. Of course, we

can assume that some of the students dropped out for financial reasons, transferred to another institution, etc., and these might be good guesses for White students. However, for minority students I suggest we need to look deeper - perhaps the institutions' unresponsiveness to culture diversity may be a contributing factor? In other words, I believe the institutions are failing to provide minority students the motivating psychological support necessary for retention and persistence leading to academic achievement and excellence.

What does this mean? It means that a higher percent of White students persist than minority students because both within the institution and in the larger community the necessary psychological supports exist for them. The truth of this statement is obvious. The banker, business owner, lawyer, doctor, and government official all live in the White student's neighborhood. These persons (all members of the same church, club, or serving on the same board as the White student's family) provide a network of assisting, informing, advising, and motivating White students. Within the university the predominantly White faculty, administrators, and ethno-centric curricula are all favorable to the White student's psychological motivation to succeed. Sometimes, some minorities are included in the network of psychological supports. And, as minorities co- lete their educations and enter the professions, a small minority support network is developing. Meantime, minorities in higher education have a very limited psychological support and motivating network. Minorities who succeed in spite of the limited psychological support network are extremely able or lucky--usually both.

But can we leave minority achievement and excellence to luck? When we equate New Mexico's future to what happens to minorities the answer is obvious. What must be done?

Clearly, none will deny that few students achieve without psychological support from a large number of sources - the family, community, and schools. It is also true that the minority student's family/community, at best, is slowly developing psychological support networks. Therefore, I believe institutions of higher education and training have an increased responsibility to provide necessary and culturally responsive psychological supports for these students.

Basically, I am talking about the institutions' responsibilities to provide a culturally responsive atmosphere which will attract minority students and motivate their academic achievement and excellence. Unfortunately, too often in institutions of higher education as in other American institutions, reigning Whites demonstrate a great genius for separating their espoused idealistic beliefs from practices. Although the institutions' personnel bristle at charges of racism, it stubbornly refuses to change in any meaningful degree the traditional practices which subtly abort minority students' motivation for the retention and persistence necessary for academic achievement and excellence.

The truth of this statement is revealed in the high attrition and alienation among minorities in the institutions of higher education. In effect these students are "pushed-out". What are the normative and structural practices within the predominantly White institutions which contribute to "pushing-out" the minority student?

Braddock[4] has identified many such practices. Among these are:

1. insensitive and indifferent faculty and students;
2. ethno-centric nature of the curricula; and
3. an absence of appropriate role models (minority faculty and administrators).

These practices are discussed within the contexts of the Challenge: How does the institution deal with historical racism?

Challenge: Dealing with historical racism.

a. The institution of higher education can make certain that its policies and procedures are free from any taint of racism. The star Native American athlete is not uncommon, but where are the Native American coaches?

Institutions can keep a vigil on the faculty/administrators they hire. Are these persons sensitive to cultural diversity? Faculty/administrators who cannot receive and teach their colleagues and students in the multi-cultural society are not "excellent". The excellent faculty can accept social equality, and set the proper atmosphere in which minority brain power and motivation for academic excellence can be developed.

Since many of the institutions' personnel have been socialized in a racist society, the institution can teach students and facutly alike about race and racism. The institutions must teach and stress the beauty of our multi-cultural state, the beauty of each group's life-style, music, dance, art, and literature. These classes, specialized conferences, or short courses can reach out to alumni, scholars, bankers, and lawyers in the larger community.

b. Minority faculty

Overall minorities comprise a very small proportion of the total body of personnel in New Mexico institutions of higher education. The picture is worse for Blacks and Native Americans whose distributions vary from a small number to zero among the institutions. Notwithstanding their very small number, minority faculty play significant roles impacting on the overall psychological support for minority students. These roles go beyond classroom teaching because we know that "teaching" occurs in both the formal setting (in the classroom) as well as in the informal context (outside the classroom). In the informal context, minority faculty, serve as teachers in the form of inspirational role modeling. How do inspirational role models relate to student motivation for retention and persistence?

First, the minority role model is visible proof to the student that a minority may reach certain levels of achievement. Equally important, role modeling offers the minority student self-esteem. No one - Black-White, Hispanic, or Native American - can maintain self-respect without

role models with whom he/she may identify. This is especially true in situations whereby the very young student consistently sees his/her group massively excluded, not only from the most meaningful and prestigious positions withing the institution, but are also excluded in the very symbol of the university. For example, the tri-cultural logo of New Mexico State University depicting the Anglo, Native American and Hispanic cultures. The logo is a disconcerting blow to Blacks in New Mexico; and, the logo is long overdue for a change that will more accurately reflect New Mexico - the multi-cultural state.

In addition to role modeling minority faculty impact upon minority students in other ways. Here are examples.

There is the identification of minority faculty as informational resources persons for minority students both within and outside one's own field of expertise or interests. This is particularly true where matters of race, prejudice and discrimination are involved. As part of being the "resident specialist" on such matters, minority faculty are often sought out by their colleagues as guest lecturers, for advice and for assistance in dealing with a "problem" minority student in the colleague's class.

At other times minority faculty may be sought out by the minority student needing help with a personal, social or academic problem. On my campus, where the Black and Native American professionals are in particularly short supply, visible and willing Black faculty can become

somewhat overwhelmed in the designated roles of "resident specialist", "intermediary', "information and referral agent" and "counselor". I must hasten to add, in this regard, minority faculty feel a special obligation to provide encouragement and emotional support to students. And why not? Minority facutly recognize that sometimes minority students have unique needs which the student believes can best be met by minority faculty. When this happens, the availability and responsiveness of minority faculty can be the deciding factor in the student's motivation for retention and persistence. Therefore, responding to student needs becomes a high priority for minority faculty. This is a valid priority because, in general, minority faculty are cognizant at some level at least, of the fact that in the predominately White institution of higher education, minority students are in large measure one's "raison d'etre".

To summarize the role of minority faculty these words by Carter H. Woodson[5] seem most appropo: "It becomes clear then, higher education is more than a process of merely imparting information...For me," he continues, "education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin life as they find it, and to make it better."

This is the challenge: Institutions of higher education should seek out minority faculty. It is not enough to say, "We would hire a minority thermodynamist, but none is available." What about the disciplines in which these groups are available?

c. Psychological support and cultural responsiveness beyond the "Ivory Tower".

After dealing with its own atmosphere to insure psychological supports that are culturally responsive, the institution of higher education has another role. This role is to venture beyond the "Ivory Tower" and campaign for external psychological supports for minority students. This responsibility can be awesome in a racist resistant society. However the prestige of top university personnel committed to a racist free society can be powerful influences for such important tasks. Here are two examples.

1. The institution can campaign against inferior elementary and secondary educational systems that cripple so many youths - Black, White, Hispanics, Native American alike. This really makes sense when one considers that excellent students also bring excellence to the institution. Also, teaching basic skills at the lower levels is certainly more cost effective than remedial education at the university level.

2. Last but not least, recognizing the high regard minorities hold for higher education, every institution should campaign for Native American, Black, and Hispanic representation on every board of regents, and every board of education in New Mexico!

MINORITY ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Part II. Excellence and Excellence Accountability: A Minority's Perspective

Excellence in terms of input - excellent faculty research publications, facilities... has been articulated by the institutions. I believe such a myopic vision of excellence is unresponsive to the significant numbers of minority graduates from the "commendable excellent" institutions who are neither socially functional nor employable. Further, I believe that such a vision serves only illusions of luster and is self-defeating in that it circumscribes the institution's potential to be truly excellent.

To this purpose, I would propose that institutions re-define excellence in higher education in terms that give equal weight to input and output. Such a definition would state: <u>excellence in higher education encompassess excellent faculty, research...and whose graduates meet highest levels of employability and social functioning</u>.

Understanding a minority's perspective in expanding the definition of excellence to focus in on graduates who can successfully compete in employment opportunities and who are socially functional requires an understanding of both history and current problems faced by minorities. The historical struggles of minorities for survival, cultural identity and equal access to opportunities to share the American dream are well known and need not be repeated. However, I shall briefly discuss current problems of unemployment and limited social functioning in

order to provide perspectives for understanding and acting upon the challenges which follow the discussions.

a. Problem: minority unemployment

Nationally, the disparity between minority and White unemployment has reached the widest point since the Department of Labor began compiling unemployment statistics by race. In some areas unemployment among minorities has reached such high levels that it has become self-perpetuating. That is, there is a tendency among the unemployed to assume joblessness is a permanent fact of life.

Moreover, since it seems apparent that the national government has adopted a policy of unemployment to reorder the economy, cool inflation and to solve the energy shortage, we can expect minorities to suffer even higher levels of unemployment.

A national policy of unemployment hurts minorities more than the rest of the population who, historically, have more economic security and employment options. Too, a national policy disrupts the traditional patterns of minorities for dealing with unemployment--that is, to leave a depressed area and to seek employment in the large urban centers. Since employment has hit almost every geographic area, migration is no longer an option.

High unemployment among minorities represents a dual tragedy: not only do minorities suffer, society also suffers. Pockets of groups

perpetually unemployed, and therefore ill-prepared to meet societal demands and responsibilities are costly, draining and counter-productive. The high costs of poor health, welfare payments and crime are examples. More examples are the drain and counter production of purposeless people fraught with despair, distrust, fear, alienation and destructive motivations. New Mexico can ill afford the costs!

What is the answer? "Education is not the only answer, but without it there is no other answer", so says a prominent display in the Albuquerque airport. (The display is a compelling plea to help Native American children to escape the dismal fate of impoverished Native American families in New Mexico.

Education is not a new answer for minorities. Minorities have long regarded education as the basic to employment, survival, social acceptance and upward mobility. In turn, education and employment have been viewed as basics to the strong and stable minority family and community. Although education per se is not a new answer, what is new is the kind of education and skills required. In our technological society, minorities can no longer survive as "hewers of wood" and "carriers of water" for the world. What then is the challenge for excellence accountability in higher education and training? The Answer: Minorities must be trained in skills necessary to successfully compete in employment opportunities. And where are the opportunities? The answer is in this Challenge: <u>excellence in higher education is to provide quality counselors</u> to help minority students to understand the nature of

employment demands in our fast changing "mental world of technology and the sciences".

The counselor should help the minority to understand that, despite the seemingly national policy of unemployment, jobs do exist. My experience on the State Personnel Board confirms this. Almost every month the board is requested to approve an emergency measure to retain someone in a job that has a very small availability pool. Yes, jobs do exist. The catch is, the jobs exist for those with the proper credentials and skills. These facts are further supported by this report from the National Urban League:

From 1974-75 there were 3.5 million new job openings in private industry. Fifty-three percent of these positions went to White women, 26% to White men and 21 % to minorities (Hispanics 12%, Blacks 5%, and 4% others). Of course some of the jobs were denied minorities because of discrimination; but we must face it: A lack of educational credentials and skills were no less the crippling enemy!

Looking ahead, we have been told that by the year 2000, just a few years away, one-half of all jobs in America today will not even exist. They will be replaced by automation. And new industries and technologies will bring new job opportunities. Unquestionably, minorities must either be qualified or must be prepared to see job opportunities go to others.

Challenge: excellence accountability in higher education is to seek out, educate, train and utilize every ounce of brain power minorities possess. This is paramount if the institution is to prepare minorities for the job opportunities in a world of technology. We have one lone Black Astronaut. Hundreds like him could have been trained in New Mexico's excellent schools of engineering and technology. It is nothing less than amazing that while Blacks are 60% of the NBA and 35% of major league baseball teams, yet Blacks are less than 4% of doctors, and less than 2% of engineers. This is not to imply that talented athletes should be channeled from sports into the hard sciences. What is indicated is that since "athletic" talent represents a much smaller availability pool than a "brain power" pool, we believe that recruitment efforts and support for minority "brain power" should at least approximate efforts for the former. Moreover, knowing that NBA only has about 3000 positions, we must recognize that the greatest resources of minorities lie in "brain power". The institution must seek out and nurture minority brain power. I believe this is excellence accountability in higher education.

Challenge: excellence in higher education is setting functional performance standards and demanding that minorities meet the standards. According to my informal student survey, minority students believe that attention to the limited functional proficiencies of minorities is long overdue. The students expressed concern that the problem will become even more acute without prompt attention. They see that functional illiteracy is crippling both in the job market and in daily living.

I agree with the students. Far too many minorities are functionally illiterate. And, this is no less true even for minorities who are College graduates or spend a number of years in the "excellent" institution.

Functional illiteracy describes the minority who can read the words on a sign or pages of a book but is unable to understand and analyze what was read. It is not unusual for the graduate to be unable to correctly spell the name of the institution from which she/he was graduated. There is also the problem of the minority who insists on communicating in a "non-mainstream" "folk language." Such language may be effective in the minority's immediate neighborhood, but such oral and written language will probably prevent the minority from being considered qualified for a job which otherwise she/he is fully capable.

This is not to say that minorities need to give up social and ethnic heritage, but minorities must be prepared to extend beyond one's heritage if one is to function within the mainstream. In the realistic expectations of "mainstream" America, sub-cultural communication patterns can be pursued in addition to mainstream proficiency norms, but <u>certainly not</u> in lieu of those standards.

<u>This is the challenge: The institutions of higher education should</u> recognize that although the minority student may not share a privileged socio-cultural background, if the student has adequate potential and

personal determination to take advantage of developmental opportunities, she/he can achieve an acceptable level of functional proficiency. In addition to the skills of language, the student can and must develop skills of logic, analysis, problem solving and test-taking. Within the context of this goal, excellence accountability is two fold: 1) faculty is accountable to demand and teach functional proficiency; and 2) the student is accountable to master and to demonstrate the vital skills.

Challenge: excellence in higher education is preparing minorities for leadership, political and economic power.

Leadership and political-economic power round out what meaningful social participation is about. Minorities in New Mexico are traditionally weak in these areas. In some areas, because of population numbers, Hispanics have a fair share of political power. However, Blacks and Native Americans together probably have political and economic power equal to the proverbial thimble. Leadership is power, and without power other people make decisions that affect minority lives. How can the university prepare minority leadership?

First and foremost leadership requires the minority to be functional in "mainstream" communication skills. All other requirements are pretty general - the right courses and leadership experiences in student government and political internships. Excellence accountability is the preparation of minority leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

From a minority's perspective New Mexico institutions have a high potential to become the exemplars of how to insure minority access to excellence in higher education. I believe that New Mexico's educators know what practices make education excellent. What we need is a willingness to implement them. Parents and interested taxpayers share responsibilities to hold our institutions of higher education and training accountable. We must stop making excuses. Parents and interested taxpayers must also accept a fair share of the responsibility for motivating students. We must be prepared to pay the costs of excellence. Indeed, excellence in higher education costs, but poorly educated minorities are dead weights against New Mexico's promise of economic growth and development. Consider this analogy. If New Mexico were a car, how fast and how far do you suppose it could go with two flat tires? At the same time, if General Motors turned out a product with two flat tires year after year - what do you suppose would happen?

The flat tires are symbolic of Native Americans weaving baskets; Hispanics picking fruits and Blacks especially good in, but limited to sports and entertainment.

These symbols do not represent the potentials of Blacks, Native Americans and Hispanics. The groups are also New Mexicans and want to become a more meaningful and productive part of the whole. What changes are needed to bring these groups into a more meaningful part of the whole? This is my answer to the question - lets pump up the flat tires. Education is a good answer. Excellence and excellence accountability in education is an even better answer.

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